

An iconoclastic romp with Shakespeare: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'



Photo Kevin Berne

Annie Wordon, Anthony Fusco, Jenny Nelson, Jerrie Johnson, Amber Chardae Robinson, Kevin Kemp, Dean Linnard

By Sophie Braccini

Who says that Shakespeare's plays were elitist and hard to access? Shakespeare wrote for all the classes of the society of his day, with language that included sophisticated poetic stances as well as puns; after all, he needed to fill up a theater that included seats for the commoners. He wrote at a time when language was still fluid and he invented many words (up to 1,700 in all of this plays). It is in this vein of accessibility and contemporary creativity that Tyne Rafaeli led the 2019 production of "A Midsummer Night Dream" in Orinda: true to the spirit of a popular Shakespeare, the dynamic and entertaining production warms the heart and ignites the audience's imagination, in spite of the sometimes very cool weather at

the Bruns.

Entering the space of the outdoor amphitheater in the hills, the audience discovers a massive cube about three stories high on stage. Puck comes out of one of the many doors/windows that will open and close during the performance. The mischievous and quick-witted spirit that sets so many events in motion in the play zooms through space with grace and agility and the tone of the play is set: imagination and magic will predominate the unfolding of each scene.

"A Midsummer Night Dream" was written by a young Shakespeare on the heels of "Romeo and Juliet." Here again, young love is confronted to the intransigence of the older generation, but here we are in a comedy, meaning that all will end well. The 17th century

playwright sets his story in Athens, giving the playwright the possibility to add magical characters to the play that will influence the destiny of men at whim.

Two sets of young people escape into the woods in search of love and freedom. There, nature reigns and Athens' socializing rules are gone. Anything can happen, and Shakespeare takes that opportunity to explore the randomness of who one falls in love with, the effect of letting the most basic instinct turn people into animals, and the potentially wild nature of women, who were still considered second class citizens at the time. There are many aspects of feminism in this play that Rafaeli takes great pleasure in highlighting.

The director also manages to insert the issue of skin color

in the Shakespearean equation. Marcel Spears, casted as Bottom, is a well-known, quite funny actor (known for his role in the CBS TV comedy "The Neighborhood") who dominates the stage, especially toward the end of the play, with his remarkable comedic qualities. The casting of such a popular actor leads to a bit of unbalance in this production, however. The classic interpretation of the Dream underscores the coarseness of the workmen, but with Bottom as one of them, the light and beautiful world of the fairies is opposed. Rafaeli in this production puts them all into the same weird basket. It makes for more laughs and may be more in tune with our times where being "popular" comes first, but poetry suffers as a result.

Kudos to scenic designer Nina Ball and the invention of the scenic cube. It looks massive and distracting taking most of the stage before the play starts, but the minute actors come in and out of it, appear in windows

on the upper floor, and it gets opened in the middle, the cube adds fluidity and depth to the movements of the play. The costumes by Asta Bennie Hostetter are also very creative and daring, especially for the queen(s) – Hyppolita and Titania – played by Jerrie Johnson, a magnificent actress; and Bottom, who gets transformed into the most loveable donkey. All the actors add significantly to the comedic impact of the play: Robyn Kerr as Puck, Rami Margron as Theseus and Oberon, and Jenny Nelson, who goes from a touching Her-mia to a hilarious member of the workers' team, to name a few.

This very approachable and funny interpretation of the Dream should not be missed. It will be on stage at the Bruns Amphitheater close to the Caldecott Tunnel until June 16. Pack a picnic and have dinner on the wood tables set in the grove before the play to complete the experience. For more information, visit www.calshakes.com.

◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

OTHER

The North Orinda Fire Break is one of the highest priority projects in California. Lamorida Village is sponsoring a presentation at 1 p.m. on May 31 at LOPC. Jerry Kent, former Assistant General Manager of Operations of the Park District, will talk about the history of East Bay Regional Parks and the wildfires that have come through, and Dennis Rein of MOFD will be presenting fire break plans. Local law enforcement will be present to discuss evacuation plans, and our Community Warning System will be represented as well. www.lamorindavillage.org

Friends Corner Book Shop in Lafayette will be having a bag sale on Saturday, June 1, from 9-12; fill our bag for \$10. Located at the corner of First Street and Golden Gate Way. All proceeds benefit the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Dogtown Downtown - the dog's morning out in Lafayette from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday June 1. Bring yourself and your downtown-friendly pooch. Businesses and vendors will be open throughout downtown to greet you and perhaps offer treats. Interim City Manager, Niroop Srivatsa will be do a doggie reading at 11 a.m. at Bel and Bunna's Books. Dogs must be social, friendly and on leash at all times. More details: <https://lafayettechamber.org/dogtown/>

Community Concern for Cats invites you to meet kittens, kittens, and kittens at our adoption event from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, June 1 and 2 at Pet Food Express in Lafayette and Pleasant Hill, and Petco in Walnut Creek. For more information, see communityconcernforcats.org online.

Cancer Support Community is offering free public tours of our open space in Lafayette. Drop in between 10 and 11:30 a.m. June 8 to meet CSC staff, walk the site, and hear our plans for building a cancer community center. Location: south side of Mt. Diablo Blvd, across from Lafayette Community

Garden. Contact Libby Eppinga at leppinga@cancersupport.net or (925) 953-1216 for more information.

Alzheimer's Association to host The Longest Day Event: Sunrise Stroll to End Alzheimer's Disease from 8 to 10 a.m. on Friday, June 21 at the Lafayette Reservoir, 3849 Mount Diablo Blvd Lafayette. The Longest Day is held annually on the summer solstice; the duration of this sunrise-to-sunset event symbolizes the challenging journey that so many living with the disease and their caregivers are asked to endure. Walk around Lafayette Reservoir followed by a picnic. Water, snacks, and brunch provided. Recommended \$10 donation. Event Page: <https://tinyurl.com/sunrisestroll>

Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan hosts a free Lamorida Fire Prevention and Preparedness Workshop from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on June 27 in the Campo HS multi-purpose room. Receive updates on the new North Orinda Fuel Break, learn how to use the Community Warning System in case of wildfire or other emergencies, and get tips on preparing for the upcoming fire season. RSVP: asmdc.org/cf-events

Native living was all-age inclusive. Do you long to experience Native connective belonging to the land and would you love to experience this in the presence of the innocence of youth? Come, open your heart and receive this regenerative connection that had been ours from the beginning as we do many and all things Native. Saclan/Miwok Camp, 8 to 11:30 a.m. July 9-12. Cost: \$65; address: 3932 Mt. Diablo Blvd (across from and just west of the Lafayette Reservoir). To register for classes, please visit <http://www.lafayettecommunitygarden.org>. For more information contact us at: marthaharrislcg@gmail.com.

Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee presents 'Dolores'; Piedmont Appreciating diversity film series 7-9 p.m. June 6 at Ellen Driscoll Playhouse, 325 Highand Ave., Piedmont. Dolores Huerta co-

founded the first farm workers unions with Cesar Chavez in 1965. 'exuberantly inspiring . . . makes you want to march and dance.' Cost: Free, no RSVP needed. For more info see <http://www.diversityfilmseries.org> or call (510) 599-9227 or email julie@diversityfilmseries.org.

SENIORS

HOPE: Homeownership Protection for Elders with Victoria Snyder and Jessica Neugebauer, Contra Costa Senior Legal Services (CCSLs) from 10:30 a.m. to noon on June 23 in the Sequoia Room, Lafayette Community Center. You will learn about tools and techniques to protect your home and its equity; why it is important to file your homestead declaration; and how you might qualify for a property tax postponement. To reserve your spot contact Lafayette Senior Services: Seniors@Love-Lafayette.org or 284-5050. Members: Free; Non-Members: \$10

GARDEN

The Lafayette Community Garden and Outdoor Learning Center presents Saving Water in Your Landscape by Contra Costa County Master Gardener Roxy Wolosenko from noon to 1:30 p.m. on June 1. CCMG's Roxy Wolosenko will expertly guide the audience through a variety of practices that can help homeowners conserve water in their landscape. Learn about irrigation methods, plant selection and placement, water gardening and rainwater harvesting. Participants will also receive hands-on practice using irrigation components. Register online at www.lafayettecommunitygarden.org. Free.

Lafayette Community Garden and Outdoor Learning Center presents a discussion and brief walking tour highlighting Our Wonderful Native Plants, Presented by Susan Agnew and Janet Thomas from noon to 1:30 p.m. on June 22. To register for the class visit www.lafayettecommunitygarden.org. Free.

Quality Hearing Aids • In Ear Monitors • Ear Mold Impressions

FREE Initial Consultation
Now taking Blue Cross, Blue Shield and Medicare.

Dr. Erik M. Breitling,
Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA

LAMORINDA AUDIOLOGY

3744 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 100, Lafayette
(925) 262-4242 www.LamorindaAudiology.com

Swim Plugs • Comprehensive Diagnostic Adult Hearing Evaluations

Musicians Hearing Protection

Service Clubs Announcements

Lafayette Rotary Club

Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting.
Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

June 6: Wendy Reynolds Attorney Drunk drivers and the need for people to have trusts.	June 13: Vernon Robinson Founder of Wardrobe for Opportunity
---	--

www.rotarylafayette.org
www.facebook.com/Rotary-Club-of-Lafayette-CA

LAMORINDA SUNRISE Rotary
Friends, Fun, Service Above Self

JUNE WEEKLY MEETINGS

7: Mark Cohen speaks on the Squashdrive
14: Captain Dennis James discusses the Boeing 737 Max situation
21: Dr. Julita Baker on The Beauty of our Microbiome
28: Member Story: Rolf Jourgensen

Breakfast, Friday 7:00 a.m.
The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa, 3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, CA
www.lamorindasunrise.com

Lamorinda Weekly
is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, CA
26,600 printed copies; delivered to homes & businesses in Lamorinda.

Contact us:
Letters to the editor (max 350 words): letters@lamorindaweekly.com
Delivery issues: homedelivery@lamorindaweekly.com
Event listings: calendar@lamorindaweekly.com
Business press releases: storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com
General interest stories/Community Service: storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com
School stories/events: storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Sport events/stories/pictures: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Publishers/Owners: Andy and Wendy Scheck; andy@lamorindaweekly.com, wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Editor: Jennifer Wake; jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com
Copy Editor: Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
Sports Editor: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Advertising: 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Staff Writers:
Vera Kochan; vera@lamorindaweekly.com,
Cathy Dausman; cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com
Pippa Fisher; pippa@lamorindaweekly.com,
Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
John T. Miller; john@lamorindaweekly.com,
Sora O'Doherty; Sora@lamorindaweekly.com
Jon Kingdon; sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Digging Deep: Cynthia Brian; cynthia@lamorindaweekly.com
Food: Susie Iventosch; suziventosch@gmail.com
Contributing Writers:
Conrad Bassett, Sophie Braccini, Diane Claytor, Michele Duffy, Amanda Eck, Lou Fancher, Fran Miller, Jenn Freedman, Mona Miller, Kara Navolio, Moya Stone, Margie Ryerson, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Victor Ryerson
Calendar Editor: jaya@lamorindaweekly.com
Photos: Tod Fierner, Gint Federas
Layout/Graphics: Andy Scheck. Printed in CA.
Mailing address: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O. Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570-6133 Phone: 925-377-0977; Fax: 925-263-9223; email: info@lamorindaweekly.com
website: www.lamorindaweekly.com